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CARMEN RUSTICANUM.

A. HAZEL.

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Carmen Rusticanum.

Carmen Rusticanum:

An Essay

ON THE

Condition of the Peasantry,

CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION WITH

Memory as the Mould of Character; Hope as the Companion of Improvement; and Self-Love as the mainspring of Human Exertion; with Incidental Reflections.

BY

Aristyllus Hazel.

BIBLIOTHECA BODL.

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ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

PREFACE.

THE subject of this essay is not new. The peasant's condition has continued for ages an unsatisfactory one, its only merit being that it has supplied the materials for contemplation to several reflective minds, and a field for discussion at many a social science gathering.

The general public, usually apathetic about subjects not intimately affecting its own comfort and well-being, has either paid no attention to so dry a matter, or has been content with an occasional acute concern, and a certain chronic concurrence in impracticable remedies.

Without arrogating to himself the ability to legislate, the writer cannot perceive how any

permanent good can be anticipated until the wages of the agricultural labourer shall have risen to the standard of necessity. It is notorious that crime is the offspring of poverty; and can it be supposed that the requirements of morality are satisfied when a weekly sum of eight shillings to fifteen shillings is provided for the maintenance of a whole family?

The rural population suffers from nothing more than its tradition. Tradition perpetuates custom—custom is often an unmitigated tyrant. Women and children work in the fields because they have ever done so, and because their labour is cheaper. The excuse contains the accusation, and supplies the most potent argument against the employment of women in situations appertaining to men. The standard of wages is reduced, whilst when we consider this growing tendency in its moral and social aspect, what evils is it not responsible for?

Taking the simple fact as it stands, that in no one part of the country the wages of the agricultural labourer are commensurate either

with the cravings of nature or the dignity of a human being, the only deduction we can make is, that, considered in the ratio of the land under cultivation, there exists a superabundance of population engaged in rural pursuits.

Whether in process of time, the gradual attraction of rustic atoms by the urban masses will correct the present unjust inclination of the balance, cannot be determined. The progress, even if continuous, must be slow, whilst an always possible reaction renders the consummation still more remote. Further, whilst it is historical that a State given up wholly or immoderately to agriculture contains more than the normal germs of decay, so it must be allowed that a community disproportionately urban, must include an unwarrantable element of weakness.

The true source of the strength and prosperity of a nation is, undoubtedly, to be found in the consistency of its component parts; and that which approaches the nearest to a self-support possesses a potent preservative against internal

discontent and an impenetrable safeguard when outward dangers threaten.

There are proportions, therefore, of town and rural population, varying with the character of the country, and to disturb the balance of these is to bring misery upon one or both.

If it be assumed that the rural inhabitants of England are in excess of the number required for the proper care of the land under cultivation, it then seems pertinent to inquire whether the latter might not be advantageously increased by the addition of those tracts at present unproductive either of profit to the proprietors, or of accruement to the general weal.

In these days it seems dangerous to approach any question which involves a real or apparent antagonism of interests; but in this instance there is none. The evils of disafforesting are so widely known that the writer need scarcely repudiate any such tendencies; moreover, to denude the country of the woods, would be to rob nature of her most beautiful garment, and to commit an atrocity worse than Vandalic.

More, there are wilds necessary for the preservation of creatures, which, although only existing for the privilege and sport of the few, should, nevertheless, supply no reason of discontent to the many; because it is merely by the fortuitous occurrence of birth that the relative positions of men are determined. Let these then remain uncoveted, intact—let no mischievous utilitarian doctrine be applied here: but are there not vast stretches of untilled country, neither sanctified by the possession of a particular natural beauty, or memorable associations, nor furnishing the means of luxury or amusement?

But this is, at best, a mere suggestion. The Essay pretends less to discover specific remedies, than to deduce general conclusions. Its object, however imperfectly carried out, is chiefly to demonstrate that human nature must be accepted as it is found—to be cultivated, but not recreated; to be adapted, but not disavowed. It aspires to show the fallacies of a superficial estimate of happiness; to trace the origin of character to the associations of Memory; to

prove that the voice of Hope is alone able to wake the dormant desires; and that a prospect of Gain is essential to energy and perseverance. One word as to its construction. Of the distinction between rhyme and poetry the writer is painfully aware. He knows that in the following pages there are prosy deserts with only occasional and disappointing oases; that the sweet waters of Poesy are represented here by trickling and insignificant rills often lost altogether, and at best, unable to irrigate the surrounding expanses. To the exigencies of the subject something must be conceded, much more, probably, to the shortcomings of the author.

London, 1868.

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK I.

OF social maladies.—Of partial prosperity.—Of the traditional regard for rural life by townsfolk.—Their ignorance of rustic cares and vices.—Nature not to be reproached, if poverty exist.—Her universal benevolence.—The extremes of luxuriance and sterility adjusted by counter dispositions in man.—Of the balance of classes.—The desire for advancement tempered by circumstance.—Of hope without envy.—Happiness to be found in an equal degree in all natural conditions.—Rules just for classes, inapplicable to individuals.

BOOK I.

OF themes bucolic and the scenes they bring,
He who aspires to poesy, must sing.
New hatch'd—or bird mature—the past'ral note
Swells in his breast, and tickles in his throat.
On bright example the desire is fed,
Down the long line of exemplary dead;
Each lyre emitteth some Lycæan tone
And sweetest strain—rusticity's alone.
Through the broad space of intermediate years,
T'wards the one point—the poet's needle veers;
Each tunes his voice to catch the envied strain,
Or wields his pick to strike the sterling vein.
Some strive instruction with pastime to blend,
They charm the senses, and they serve an end;

And with amusement and advice combin'd,
Secure the int'rest and impress the mind.
No truths so forcible as those which turn
T'ward recreation, aptitude to learn;
And ere they weary with dull axioms, haste
To smooth the toil and gratify the taste.
Pledg'd to the venture, lo! my blushing verse,
Mates with gay Hope, for better and for worse.
The flame is kindled, and the shafts disgorge
Sparks from the fire of a poetic forge.
I sing to rustic air—some modest throats
Revel in wild, uncultivated notes,
Rul'd by no gamut, breath'd without control,
They only heed the bâton of the soul.
Emotion vaults premeditation's fence,
And lends the tongue a rugged eloquence;
Poesy kindles in the breast o'erfraught,
Semi-inspir'd, and struggling into art.
'Tis a grave point for the reflective mind,
Whence are the laws which regulate mankind,
Who frames their purport, who confirms their reign,
Whither appeal—or where at least complain?
On life's broad stream, the angler needs scant skill
To land the hungry semblance of an ill;

All can command the art to find offence,
And censure is man's natural eloquence.
Some champions pass existence in their mail,
Quick to cross arms and eager to assail,
With wondrous zeal they overleap the seas,
Ranging from tropics to antipodes;
Deaf to all near, their wakeful ears are set
To catch the crimes which other lands beget;
The grievous load they mercilessly bear
To England's shoulder, and affix it there,
Till scarcely Atlas had a weightier task
Than for our little island's back they ask.
I, too, surrender'd to reflection's flood,
Can find a ballast for my buoyant mood,
Nor face one sprinkle of Atlantic foam,
But find both wrong and remedy at home.
Internal maladies are craftier foes
Than they, which all their virulence disclose,
Show their full depth—their inmost core reveal—
Cure, whilst offend, and whilst they sicken, heal.
They equal tyrants who with iron hand
Rule o'er a household, or enthral a land,
Each in his sphere may lighten or oppress,
His frown may wither, or his smile may bless.

These simple truths whereat mankind may jest,
Are lost because too easily impress'd;
And merest platitudes would bear more seed
If not so plain—but some one disagreed.
Even fools have never since the world began
Argu'd that man was more or less than man;
Yet wise and fools in myriads appear
To damn the axiom they account so clear.
If all have equal souls to lose or save,
Why diff'rent chances for the lord and slave?
Here, train'd to virtue—virtue may suffice
But here, compell'd by ignorance to vice.
If all have food, and nature bids the claim,
Why not the means of sustenance the same?
Born, here, to an exuberance of wealth,
And, there, denied the requisites of health.
Here where our wisdom leans to error's side,
Ev'n truths we know are often misapplied.
Our partial knowledge just directs us clear
Of instinct's buoys, and leaves our faults to steer;
Whither to make, if nought reveal the track,
Sink, if advance, and strike, if venture back?
Our boasted science just directs us there,
To half reprove we are not as we were.

Short is the path—a few poor steps at most,
Human intelligence prints on wisdom's coast,
Whilst spread before the vision, regions lie
Horizonless, in veil'd virginity.
Who can those heights precipitous denude,
Of mystery, or wrest their solitude?
Who the wrapp'd fountain of the river gain,
Or trace the motive of the seething main;
Arouse the vales, which, unmolested, gape
At intervals athwart the wide landscape;
Expound the winds—the starry sphere define;
Or prove the veins metallic of the mine?
We snatch at wisdom's skirts, and in our hold
Remain a few entangled threads of gold;
The sight inflames—we stretch our hands for more,
Those hands encumber'd with their previous store;
Useless attempt! the fingers strive in vain,
Lost in the toils of the besetting skein!

The fabric which prosperity has spun,
Has ever been a blurr'd, a checker'd one;
Seen from a distance, studied without care,
One shade, one texture, seems prevailing there,

But handled closer, how incongruous grown,
Tints mix'd, yet each retentive of its own;
Join'd without blending, sep'rate if combin'd;
Strange, though allied—component, yet defin'd.
So, when the sun, supreme of nature's laws,
Smiles, topaz-like, from out the sky's turkois,
The days broad legions, armour-clad in light,
Make their full triumph o'er the vanquished night.
But in yon forests, or those dusky caves,
An unpierced gloom arrests stern vict'ry's waves;
There scatter'd fragments reconcert design
And Nox restores her sable hosts to line.
To be uncursed, is really to be blest,
Sorrow is never banished, but repress'd.
National wealth, prosperity and fame
Veneer the hidden, but existing, shame.
Just as the stream which innocence had quaff'd,
Holds Death in grim solution in each draught.
Granted improvement is of wide extent,
In social ranks and general government;
Yet 'tis, methinks, withal, a partial boon,
One rank at midnight, and one rank at noon;
A sun for some, for some a moon at best,
And total darkness all vouchsaf'd the rest.

To those pale dwellers in the busy street,
Whose rare excursion proves so doubly sweet,
Who, when the annual holyday is o'er,
Think Time ne'er ran so speedily before.
To them, fair visions of the scene remain,
The smiling hill, the plenty cover'd plain;
Where soft aroma rode the gentle breeze,
And music rippled from a thousand trees;
Where gaudy flies, that ne'er essay'd the town,
Rode on each leaf, and made each flower their own;
Where the sleek herd in mild composure drank
The crystal waters from the daisied bank.
Athletic youths and smiling maidens fair
Liv'd hours ambrosial—days Arcadian there;
Blushed their soft hopes and urban vice above,
Built love on passion—innocence on love.
The genial gaffer, near his leaf-cloth'd cot,
Bloom'd out a blest, if unambitious lot;
Grew weatherwise o'er lunary affairs,
And fix'd the fate of turnips, wheat, and tares.
The rosy housewife, still with charms unspent,
Shar'd his rough plenty and his blunt content,
Laugh'd o'er the follies of the youthful race,
Or kiss'd the trouble from the ruddy face.

Who can repel the delicate advance
When rural beauty bids the soul to dance?
Thrill'd by the music of the purling rill,
The heart must leap—'tis petrified if still.
There morn, noon, eve in soft succession bore
Their wonted charms, then ripened into more,
Till, crowning effort, in the mellow west
Down sinks the sun on the horizon's breast;
Light amber clouds the monarch's couch enfold,
Flooding the uplands with liquescent gold;
O'er the far hills black Night in silence creeps,
Sol hides his face, and all of nature sleeps.
To them, the thought of rural life conveys
A time all ease, a year all holydays.
They half imagine the prolific soil
Bears grain untill'd, and harvests without toil;
The ready furrow asks no quick'ning seed,
And cereals grow at random in the mead;
O'er nature's face the blush of plenty spreads,
Yield mates with yield, and produce produce weds.
A second Cœlus, with a Terra, pairs
For men, sprang giants, and now fruit for tares;
The am'rous earth incites the sun's advance,
Won by a smile and pregnant for a glance.

These worthy citizens are quite sincere,
They work at home, 'tis right they gambol here;—
Enhanc'd is ev'ry joy the soul can meet,
When Fancy lends an innocent deceit:
And could we test the barren truth below,
Each smile drew tears, each happiness gave woe.
Pleasure awards but unillumin'd eyes,
Knowledge intrudes, and beauty, startled, flies.
Yet there's a bloom upon tradition's face
No truth can fade, no cognizance displace;
The loves once cherish'd aye affection claim,
Though prov'd unreal, they allure the same;
Still our imagination paints them fair,
Till what they are, is that we dream'd they were.

To thoughtless hearts on mere exterior bent,
A past'ral life looks blest and innocent;
The features, parts and separate atoms find
No nice perception in the careless mind.
They grasp a vague and panoramic whole,
Reflecting the tradition of the soul;
They mark the golden blossom of the heath,
But never count the thorns which lurk beneath.

So, when the summer sun descends the west,
Luxuriant tints suffuse the distant crest,
Deluded childhood longs to travel there,
Nor thinks that thence his home will look as fair.
We point to pretty vales, where dotting o'er
Like foam flakes which a hundred billows bore
The sunny cots lie bosom'd on the main
Of verdant meadows and of tawny grain.
Here plenty, peace, and beauty all combin'd,
A lavish Nature gives a favour'd kind.
The rip'ning fruit—the nodding corn, behold,
The silv'ry current and its path of gold.
O'er forest shades which clothe the happy hill;
In fertile toil revolves the merry mill,
Crushing the grain prolific fields produce,
For man's enrichment, nourishment, and use.
No envy here, for all men rank the same,
Each to receive, prefers an equal claim;
No ills attendant on superfluous wealth,
No foes to peace, or enemies to health.
Here Hygia's self might, fearless, fix her throne,
And far as eagles' range, survey her own.
Virtue must thrive, bedeck'd with brightest bloom;
Life must be blest, and Heav'n be ev'ry tomb.

Oh Nature! well content I'd leave my cause,
Recipient of thy bounty and thy laws;
Blest in them both, see want's dominion clos'd,
And industry the only tax imposed.
See peoples flourish in a gen'ral sense,
Not here profusion, and there indigence.
Thought cavils not at Nature—if she give
Existence, she provides the means to live.
Withhold she that, or now concede she this,
She never mars, but always perfects bliss;
She unrestrain'd had guaranteed our rights,
Sooth'd all our wants—fed all our appetites.
Search the world through—the great terrestrial sphere,
Test all conditions, own as good is here;
Roam to the tropics, their luxuriance see,
Mark greater gifts grown lesser in degree;
Learn Nature's affluence, man's abuse,
And blessings valuable alone by use.
Our island climate, changefully sincere,
In the extreme not torrid or severe,
Can boast no treasures of an orient soil,
Yet instigates as profitable toil.
'Tis compensating element in man;
More vigorous he, when Nature is most wan;

And cultivation more than counteracts
The natural poverty of northern tracts.
Where Nature gives unask'd, zeal flags, and hence
Luxury is concomitant of indolence.
Countries by clime and situation blest,
Furnish the spoil and pillage for the rest.
Want is man's fault—all error points from there,
And Nature self-sufficient ev'rywhere.
Is he a child of Lapland, or of Ind,
Use cools the sun, or warms the frigid wind,
Supplies the food best suited to his state,
Bids flesh or cereal predominate.
From Arctic to Antarctic regions roam,
Find native wants provided for at home;
That Nature stocks the forest, sea, or mead,
And all she gives is all the local need.

Thus Nature's rule is gen'rous—but betwixt
Her hand and want a barrier is fix'd;
A genial monarch she, but 'neath her throne
Sit petty tyrants, who usurp her own.
Their narrow minds, restricted to a range,
Shudder at thought, and dread to think of change;

Agents 'twixt nature and mankind they stand,
And all must pass and much adhere their hand.
They know no theory of a gen'ral gain,
No common weal, one welfare to sustain;
He who improves, improves at other's cost,
And none can gain, but what the rest have lost.
'Tis danger then to set the bounden free,
His depth, their strength; his bonds, their guarantee;
To change his sphere, invites disorder's curse,
And spreads contention o'er the universe.
These argue slyly, and their speech contains
Something of truth to hide what wrong remains.
Borne from the hedge to the exotic's frame,
Weeds sip a daintier food, but flower the same;
Lift high their heads and snuff the fragrant air,
Think the perfume their own—their forms as fair;
Alternate twixt, confusion, anger, pride,
For better's scorn—for equals to deride.
Could not both sides their points of vantage gain,
Disputes were void, and controversies vain.
Sophistry oft o'ercomes plain honest sense,
Wily in charge and brilliant in defence;
Inflicts a wound, or turns the lance aside,
Ere thrust is known or parrv is descried.

No crazy demagogue e'er spoke his mind,
But he discours'd the welfare of mankind ;
Tyranny's scions never drew the blade,
But Freedom's was the standard they display'd ;
And to digest profession's proffer'd food,
Dishonor fights for honor, bad for good.
Whilst conscience serv'd an exculpating price,
Virtue stands charg'd with all the freaks of vice.
Here then they stop, 'tis Heaven's decree ordains,
One stated order to all time remains,
And where that order is by man revers'd,
That country sinks, anarchically curs'd.
Surrender'd this, not yet I see it bears
Against a rise which ev'ry station shares ;
Nor see I here an argument to prove,
None should aspire to reach the rank above.
Where is the man, with ev'ry prize attain'd
Each honor seiz'd, each decoration gain'd ;
Who feels his skill in all vocations sure,
His fame achiev'd, his eminence secure ?
Given the highest pinnacle of state,
T'ward lower things the hope will gravitate.
Peers will attempt the toils of humble life,
And pine for the solicitude of strife.

The very monarch of his station tires,
And to enhanc'd celebrity aspires:
Rulers, of old, preferr'd a warrior's claim,
And now they sigh for literary fame.
Each human heart, not warp'd by vice or woe,
Seeks to compete with, not to overthrow;
And hist'ry's records in thick volume tell,
Who rose deserving, bore their honors well.
Judg'd but by self, its prizes to enhance,
Must be the aim and object of advance;
Else if they level the distinction gain'd,
Without the toil they had as rich remain'd.
True, 'twas a noxious weed the wild wood bore,
But, cultivated, 'tis a weed no more.
The frothiest democrat the world can give,
Should fortune smile, becomes conservative
With increas'd hoard, he reconceives his part,
Nor longer bears equality at heart.
'Tis ever so, the lower few who join,
Are the alloys to toughen the whole coin.
They bring a practis'd strength to languid spheres,
And well rebut mere visionary fears.
My muse disdains to sing a war of grade,
To raze the steps Society has made;

To venture lines, which reason must refute,
To fell the tree, that some may pluck the fruit.
While this wide world exists a world at all,
From high to low, there must be gradual fall;
Each in his place, by social mortar set,
From base to roof, from roof to minaret;
All must submit, where order holds her sway;
All cannot govern, but all must obey.
But if each argues he's not placed right;
Not high enough, or at too great a height;
If all have visions of a misplac'd lot,
Who safe in palace, or who blest in cot?
Here Nature caters to allay our fears
And partial joy, integrity appears,
'Tis habit moulds the pliant heart to bliss,
Here 'tis a fortune ask'd, and here, a kiss.
They both are pledg'd to satisfy if gain'd;
They both bring disappointment when obtain'd.
Her kindly wisdom modifies our sense,
Of what is happiness, what competence;
Taught by her rule, a little can appease,
Enough seems luxury, industry seems ease.
So by comparison all states appear,
Rich, poor, deprav'd, or elevated here;

Less than a kingdom, monarchs would despise,
But want sees bliss in bare necessities.
To man, how fleet a bird seems on the wing;
Yet lightning is to light a torpid thing,
And Egypt's pyramids—her barren pride—
Cower, pigmies, under Everest's high side;
Thus resolution to advance would be
Restrain'd to bounds and temper'd to degree.
Hope, purg'd of envy, never pain'd the breast,
But love of self bred justice to the rest.
Man's hope directed less to quit than raise
His given sphere, deserv'd all classes' praise.
Man's gain re-acts, his benefits accord,
A richer tenantry means richer lord.
The humblest boors, the rulers of the earth,
All chance alike the lottery of birth,
And happy 'tis, the heart ordain'd to less,
Can look where Fortune smiles, and acquiesce;
Ponder the pleasures riches can bestow,
Nor find in toil unmitigated woe.
The heir of might, by dint of training proud,
Covets the sweet approval of the crowd;
While meagre want, attun'd to kindred chord,
Flings its rent cap, and cheers the pamper'd lord.

Thus man on man, and rank on rank repose,
And none are born hereditary foes.
Efforts to mend, not hostile in intent,
Husband the force, else jealousy had spent
Nor locust-like sweep broad'ning o'er the plain,
More to the yield's destruction than their gain;
And higher aims, involving happier mood,
Work out the problem of a gen'ral good.
Here demagogues, those parasites which seize
On Freedom's skirts and mar her native ease,
Disclose the narrow bias of their aim,
And lisp of bonds whilst they attempt her name.
He who demands what merit makes his own,
May grasp, unchalleng'd, coronet or crown,
Provided that the prize his fortune bears,
No law of right, twixt man and man impairs.
I trow the moral that we gain is this:
Each state contains its complement of bliss;
Where Nature wills a lesser pain to give,
There she has planted nerves more sensitive;
Each its necessity, more or less,
But not to one a perfect happiness.
Where find we more than an allotted share
In riches?—mark the counterweight of care;

In honors?—test them, find the blaze of fame,
Beats like keen satire on the inner shame.
In knowledge?—ask the scholar if his store
Can soothe the gnawing of that chronic—more.
In friends?—consult experience and be wise,
Friendships are ambush for our enemies.
Cease then to wish conditions not your own,
Nor seek elsewhere that found in self alone.
Heaven gives to each all needful for his state,
But leaves man freedom to manipulate;
Thus, little gifts to best advantage us'd,
O'ertake the greater by the vain abus'd.
The hungry mind for higher food perplex'd,
Leaves its own sphere and finds it in the next.
But if that mind had found its place suffice,
Were it a proof of misery or vice?
Not so, else we invert all laws at once,
And leave no steps between the sage and dunce.
Is this the wise conclusion we would rule,
Man must be a philosopher or fool?
The fact would make us poorer than we are,
Some minds unstretched at all, the rest too far;
Here, without sense, or there, with sense too fine,
Less than a man, or apeing the divine.

All men disdaining their adapted state,
All with some thin ambition to inflate,
To watch its clumsy efforts to ascend,
Then sink, despairing at its wretched end.
'Tis a poor object for our solace here,
A bubble in ambition's atmosphere.
Hope sends it forth, indifferent to cost,
'Tis breath'd on, and irreparably lost.
Fame's laurel is the tardy growth of years,
Unseen, neglected, till its strength appears;
Then leaves are pluck'd and twisted to a wreath,
To circle the pale iciness of Death!
So happiness is found, not here or there
But if the heart will have it, ev'rywhere.
Poverty's toil, wealth's indolence she shares,
But most she follows whom an envy spares.
True joy prefers to walk the lowly glade
Link'd with sweet quiet, in the dewy shade;
She shuns the plains with noonday fervour beat,
Their din of crowds—their dissonance of feet.
Oh, envy not the honor'd or the great—
He, most obscure, attains the happiest state;
Free to repose, nor harness'd to a name
To drag through the fierce meridian of fame.

Then, if 'tis ordered that the peasant must
Remain a peasant, is that law unjust?
Nay, general rules are not unjust in tone,
Applied to all, their purport seems to none.
Who hears all curs'd, thinks he himself is blest,
And each deems self exception to the rest.
Justice demands the prohibition falls
Upon the mass, not individuals.
None can have sure success or destin'd prize,
But all should share in possibilities.
In every sphere some more than common mind,
Aspires to leave the normal depth behind;
To rend the shackles of ignoble birth,
And claim the one paternity of worth.
Who shall gainsay the rustic rank may claim
Some who can boast the lineage of fame;
Who free of bonds, from ignorance would rise,
And gain the place their heritage denies?

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK II.

OF memory as the mould of character.—Memory designed for instruction.—The dispositions whether for good or evil analogous.—Childhood the source of inclination.—Of the formation of characters by contact and intimacy.—The same susceptible of good or evil formation.—The desires repeated by habit.—Of the peasant's infancy and youth.—Of early training.—Of reason and instinct.—Home, the treasure of life.—Its influence upon character.—Of Woman considered in connection with home.—Education neutralised by opposing examples.—The mind's requirements and aspirations adjusted to its normal opportunities.—Pleasure necessary to all, and assumed when really unattainable.—Of the peasant's share in the honors of the world.—Of town vices.—The true test of virtue found in temptation.

BOOK II.

WHEN on the neck of retrospection's steed,
The reins hang loose, and cares no more impede,
The jaded hack is ne'er disposed to roam,
But turns his head instinctively t'wards home.
There is a home in ev'ry brain, some ground
Whereto each thread of memory is bound;
Some little island in our life-time's track,
Whose smiling beacon fondly calls us back;
And there it is, upon that sacred soil,
We plant the dear inducement of our toil;
And for some early love, some hope of old,
Ev'n coward hearts beat timourously bold.
'Tis on the past our aspirations rest,
Each scheme matur'd is infancy's bequest.

The noon-tide sun but shines with warmth increas'd—
Our youth beheld his advent in the East.
His pristine rays play'd o'er our spring-time face,
Saw each success, or witness'd each disgrace;
And if the autumn bear the promis'd fruit,
He sooth'd the germ and watch'd the blossom shoot.
Methinks that in the mould of mem'ries past,
Each mind is shap'd—each character is cast;
The light of vanish'd days illumes afar,
And casts its halo round the things which are.
Lo! when imagination's bonds are loos'd,
The forms appear our boyish brains produced.
Distorted or improv'd, they each arise,
In swift succession to the ravish'd eyes.
The hand of mem'ry strikes the note of yore,
And finds the heart responsive as before.
Well I recover from my earliest year,
Each infant hope and each incipient fear;
I close my eyes, and ere my rev'ries break,
Think as I thought, and lisp whene'er I speak;
A genial sap flows through the wither'd stem,
Blossoms unfold, and honey'd each of them:
The birds of fancy in the branches sing,
And hope paints promise of perpetual spring.

Extoll'd Olympus ! in my deepest heart
Thy image lives—thy blissful counterpart.
No winter or decay awaits me there ;
Each breath propitious, ev'ry quarter fair.
The flimsiest phantoms of excited mind,
Raise their thin fabrics, ignorant of wind.
The frailest bark my venture ever gave
Wings o'er a sea that never knew a wave.
Freighted with hope, she speeds time's ocean o'er,
Barters, returns, and bears an orient store.

When man gain'd MEMORY, Heav'n design'd a friend,
To teach him when to yield, and when defend
A magazine ; whence he might aptly draw,
Records of facts and precedents of law.
A dictionary where the soul could find
A key to each expression of the mind,
Where brains perplex'd could grasp a ready guide,
Receive the doctrine, find the test applied.
'Twas to crush error ere effect began,
Reflection's faculty was granted man.
Now when despair arrests the eager arm,
Pale to a threat, and to an omen calm,

Taught by the past, we face the subtle foe,
Unmask his ambush, his proportions know;
Yield to no panic, but as vet'rans stand,
Skill'd to obey, and able to command.
Or if hot passion mingle with our care,
We fly to youth and find a haven there.
Refit the shatter'd bark for manhood's strife,
And with new vigour breast the waves of life.
But mem'ry—the soul's rudder—yet may brave
Helmless herself, the fury of the wave;
Doom'd to the fate of the abandon'd spar,
Where billows wrestle in intestine war.
Her potent counsel, competent to bless,
May brood on vice and bring forth wickedness;
May strengthen by analogy in ill,
And pander merely to the moment's will.
Memory is the hist'ry of the past,
Where repetition lingers to the last;
Extract one year, peruse its diary through,
And all the rest are indicated too.
True, there are diff'rent shades and changing hues,
Thoughts which commend, and records which accuse;
But all our vices, all our virtues stand,
A semi-blending and half congruous band:

Allied they differ, diff'ring, they condone,
Opposed in creed, in their extraction one;
And characters, like water, mostly gain,
A common level, an unbroken plane.
Here lies the proof best suited to our state,
Error indulg'd is error's advocate.
Built to a plan, we everywhere detect,
The inclination of the architect:
As voids appear, we find to each reserv'd,
What use has pointed, or what habit curv'd;
Each by sheer instinct seeks its proper place,
All coalesce to ugliness or grace.

First then, I say, reflection's lessons teach
Life's earlier symptoms to the final reach,
Reduc'd to practice; we must gather thence
The cause in contact, acts are consequence.
From childhood's judgment there is no appeal,
It legislates to manhood's woe or weal.
Each notion trac'd, and ev'ry shadow thrown,
Seek form from mem'ry—from tradition, tone.
The babes of poverty and riches share
A common instinct, but a diff'rent care;

Each to the face of its acquaintance turns,
And imitates much faster than discerns.
The twain committed to the same control,
Grew similar in sentiment and soul;
Transpos'd, the gentle innocent grew wild,
And cultivation mark'd the peasant's child.
High places are the prizes in birth's game—
The infant knows not whence his titles came;
Obeys, the same, his sire's or servants' call,
And gives his kiss or petulance to all.
The choicest specimen of floral seed,
Shrinks from neglect, and blossoms as a weed;
And all the rays our gardeners impart
Are beds of weeds, intensified by art.
Training it is which models all mankind—
Nature ne'er planted a develop'd mind;
Genius or lunacy may spring innate,
But art must perfect or must palliate.
Admitting this, the inference to draw,
Is not a partial, but a general law,
That Nature gives alike ere thoughts begin,
Chance to excel, or tendency to sin.
Each disposition as enjoin'd appears,
The one induc'd, the one restrain'd with years.

Either neglected, weakens at the fount,
And leaves the other to flow paramount.
The marble block, for statue's form design'd,
May symbolize an undevelop'd mind;
The mass is there, but can we thence pretend,
To compass the elaborated end?
The cunning hand supplies the needed shape,
And bids a Momus laugh, or Somnus gape;
Death-dealing Mars obeys the subtle knife,
Or Hercules exuberant of life.
What then? must we a settled form declare,
And deem the stone compell'd that shape to bear?
Juno's propriety, or scorning dress
A Venus habited in nakedness?
Not so: the mass subservient to his will,
Became a monument of good or ill.
Each limb reclin'd, not in the folds of fate,
But as the moment's mood might instigate.
Change but the temper, whence his motive lean'd,
And he who carv'd an angel, form'd a fiend;
Propitiate him to another mood,
And where a Venus, a Minerva stood.
'Gainst crime's bequeath, what potion can avail,
Vicious infection is the poor's entail.

Who can define, what limit can suffice,
The action of hereditary vice?
The well-to-do, if failing as the poor,
Keep the contagion from the nurs'ry door;
Rule decently the family abode,
And boast the semblance of a moral code.
Instructors guide the undevelop'd mind,
And sin, if witness'd, is at least refin'd;
From the rank lees the worldly draught is strain'd,
Modesty taught, and decency attain'd.
No such reluctance marks the peasant's cot,
Inured to vice, he knows no better lot;
School'd to one standard, he desires no more;
Appetite his god, as 'twas his sire's before.
Thus 'tis the drowsy bat at ev'ning shade,
Roams the contracted area of the glade;
Doubles from wall to wall his narrow flight,
And plucks his day from out the jaws of night.
Hearts take the impress of the moods they meet,
To reimpart them to the daily sheet.
The sight resumes the too familiar page,
From boy to man, maturity to age;
He reads the well-known columns off by heart,
Quick but by habit, mem'ry all his art.

Here some grey-bearded libertine displays,
The artful tactics of his early days;
Postures each charm, performs with studied grace,
And smiles oblivious of a wrinkled face.
The quondam sportsman, feeble grown at last,
Lives on the active mem'ries of the past;
Rambles again the moors and banks he trod,
Takes his quick aim, or plies the supple rod.
Follow him now where forms conserv'd proclaim,
His early prowess and his harmless fame.
How true the story! watch his sparkling eyes,
As he recalls that shot, that run, that rise:
How natural seems the simulated zeal,
The trigger's catch, the turmoil of the reel!
Here, 'tis a cricketer—he feigns a ball,
Makes phantom catches, or dreams wickets fall;
Bowls swift assaults, or slows which vantage beg,
And gravely tells of drives, or hits to leg.
The warrior,—whose ebbing strength is spent,
In strategy and bellicose intent,
Where hosts contend, his chief reflections are
Wrapp'd in the last intelligence of war.
Thus 'tis the tendencies of youth unite,
To shape the love and form the appetite.

The rudder rusted to a point holds fast,
And there inclines the vessel to the last.
Habit commands, what choice had half denied,
And life seems in its nature petrified.

The infant rustic, suckled on neglect,
Lives to illustrate reason and effect;
True to the surest of admitted laws,
The product bears the profile of the cause.
From leaf to branch, to blossom from the fruit,
From all, from either, we attain the root.
The peasant's manhood bears the early doom,
The shelt'ring hedge and the deserted room;
Where piteous cravings for attention bore
The balm of sleep, then waken'd into more.
Whilst in the neighb'ring field the mother bent
Her back to toil, to grossness her attent,
For meagre hire, well pleas'd to lose the place
No want should sink, no poverty efface,
To barter her lone riches, moral health,
For shade of gold and parody of wealth.
Grown to the youth, his adolescence bears,
No kind instruction to his op'ning years;

The toil for pence is all his Mentor knows,
And all his education, fright'ning crows.
Or tending, if varieties combine,
The fretful geese, or the phlegmatic swine;
Leading the stolid team across the soil,
Or herding cattle with phonetic toil.
The maiden, to a kindred lot design'd,
And nought but native modesty defin'd,
On wave reluctant, is a moment toss'd,
Then swept into the sea of vice and lost.
There is no middle course twixt right and sin,
Where ends man's virtue, there must vice begin.
There is no virgin ground, no neutral sphere,
With none of good or bad located there,
But ev'ry thought pertains, and ev'ry breath
Is drawn to moral life, or moral death.
Yet there are roads so artfully inclined,
No hill is steep, no gradient defin'd;
No giddy depths their wily course betray,
Shaded the path, circuitous the way;
A sense of safety soothes the drowsy mind,
It cannot see before, nor look behind;
Nor till some effort of its virtue tries,
Knows whence its fall, how difficult to rise.

The rustic has no footing to retain,
Nought to defend, but ev'rything to gain;
Last in the field, nor eager to contest,
Not prone to hope, or wishful to be blest.
He needs no fall to reach the lowest scale,
No slip, no wreck that his ambition fail;
Clasp'd in the grasp of his predestin'd state,
No sins attract, no deeps can gravitate,
Beyond his depths few fresh temptations call,
Doom'd to the base, existence has them all.

When doubts perplex, how sweet it is to turn
To some old axiom and the path discern;
Instruction is a light-house to the mind,
A chart with all life's passages assign'd;
A friendly post when thickets intervene,
To point the way and clarify the scene.
Loos'd on uncompass'd seas, it must depend,
On some stray zephyr where the voyage end;
But barks surrender'd to a master will,
Range the dark waters with consummate skill.
Ignorance of virtue renders evil dear,
And love of wrong perpetuates it here.

So when impending death dispels life's dream,
Where sinks complaisance, and where self-esteem?
Time's curtain lifts—eternal light beams in,
And man first learns the utmost of his sin.
Where ignorance teaches, can a man be wise?
He errs the more, the more such reas'ning tries.
Instinct without a training to direct,
Is but the sophistry of intellect.
True it were impossible to refute,
The ways sagacious of the inferior brute.
They boast an inborn sense not prone to fail,
Tread paths unlearn'd, snuff danger in the gale.
Unerring genius takes the place of thought,
They know untold, and comprehend, untaught.
But human hearts bear no such passive skill,
There reason sits, and argues well or ill.
Error incites, if none of precept guide;
No neutral man, but sway'd by ev'ry tide;
Nor, Aura-like, the mind unbidden vies,
O'ercomes, unspurr'd; unprompted, claims the prize.
The very reason Providence design'd,
To sit in calm revision of the mind,
Sway'd by emotion's eloquence can lend,
Its argument to an unworthy end;

Like weapon trusted to a childish arm,
Pluck'd from the hold, and wielded to its harm.
The rural mind is skill'd enough to know,
Some men seem bless'd, and some seem curs'd below.
His spark of reason flashes through the night,
Too pale to guide, too fugitive to light.
Shortsighted efforts are conviction's most,
And present trifles bought at after cost.
No past admonishes, no future fires,
Nor practice bids, nor permanence inspires;
To soothe the moment's appetite and sense,
Is all his hope, and all his providence.
Hence, to increase the husband's scanty yield,
The wife, the children, join him in the field.
The niggard wage is swell'd by half its score,
And home and virtue fade for evermore.

For gen'ral rule, with few exceptions torn,
Home is the jewel next the bosom worn;
And be it cot or mansion, there we find
The mould for each construction of the mind.
Home is the treasure we delight to guard,
Its safe possession is a rich reward;

Near the lov'd precincts Fancy plants her wand,
It buds, it blooms, and all seems bare beyond.
The peasant's home is not of homes most fair,
He snuffs no sweetness in his native air,
Abstracted theories never were his whim,
And contemplation has no charms for him.
His soul ne'er swell'd with a domestic bliss,
Fancy was smother'd when a chrysalis;
He overlooks the mirthful and sublime,
And knows no art to gild the shafts of Time.
This being so—the real is his all,
Those cold blank tones which, unaccented, fall
On life's tir'd ear, and with their irksome strain
Stifle the soul and stupify the brain.
Home is the spring of all that's good and true,
The flowers of life draw thence their loveliest hue;
Home is the fountain of a bitter flood
Which scours the heart, and enervates the blood;
A fruitful soil, whose spacious fields are rife
With all the balm or all the thorns of life.

Hail woman! goddess of the hearth—the queen
Of joys unfading—pastures ever green.

Or hail as witch malignant, who can sow
Time's shallow furrows with eternal woe!
Given the home, 'tis easy to infer
The depth or altitude of character.
Life is a mirror, and therein we see
Man's home, man's mem'ry, and man's infancy;
We strike life's chord, and in the tones which come,
We hear the clash or melody of home.
Woman's it is to cultivate the flowers
Which sparsely grow in this bleak world of ours;
To watch the sun, and from some wintry ray
To weave the brilliance of a summer day.
Blest errand! waifs of pleasure to decoy,
And snatch a lock from the gold hair of joy;
To pluck the burden from the back of care,
And teach dull toil ethereal wings to wear;
To light the paths where feet entangled grope,
Or hover near the funeral of hope;
O'er pain's wan cheek, the happy flush to bring,
And in bare hearts plant all the germs of spring.
Methinks 'tis not too bold a truth to dare
That woman mars or makes existence fair;
Given the threads of life—her fingers plait
The changing hues of deviating fate.

True, there are those who trust her not, but wean
Their souls from love—their eyes from beauty's sheen,
And, like some rugged mountain heights, forswear
Their native earth, and breathe a rarer air.
No dainty blossoms clothe their stern grey sides,
Nor o'er their hearts break passion's swelling tides ;
Uprais'd they stand, above Time's hopes and strife,
Scorning the fears and appetites of life.
In vain the valleys proffer all their charms,
And woo indifference with outstretch'd arms ;
In vain that thrill of rapt'rous music rose,
Or passion breath'd on those eternal snows ;
No hopes illicit, their stern spirits stain,
They see—hear—feel, and, from their souls, refrain.

Of all inducements to be blest or curs'd,
Of all incitements—put example first :
Lur'd by a strange desire for things we see,
Example traps, and habit turns the key.
Precocious ears devour with hungry zest
Each wanton word, and leave it to digest.
The childish heart its coming part essays,
In the sad drama of maturer days.

Fann'd with example, aspirations fire,
The son hopes most to emulate the sire.
Now wand'ring past the village tap he stays
To fling the scene a meditative gaze.
Acme of hope! ambition's highest aim,
That he may riot uncontroll'd the same.
He, too, would mingle with the festive throng,
To drain the bowl, and roar the ribald song;
He, too, would wager there, and fling the ball,
And stake hard earnings on a skittle's fall.
He yearns tow'rds vice for want of better aim,
Finds bliss in crime, and happiness in shame.
Thence, we must learn that education fails,
When an opposing influence prevails;
When rang'd against the doctrines of the school,
Parental habits contravene each rule.
Here 'tis imperious Nature law retains,
Respect is sunk—authority remains.
Again the reas'ning is on error's side,
And native instinct proves a sorry guide.
To work a cure, the remedy must come,
Not to the child alone—but to its home.
This is the deadly character of sin,
Where will its influence weaken, if begin?

Like wild bloom's seed, by ev'ning zephyr caught,
A stone will nourish, and a rut support.
It asks no shade, it needs no sun, to bear,
Fitting each soil, propitious ev'ry air.
It casts fresh pollen with no niggard will,
Peoples the vale, and populates the hill.
Where is the prophylactic to arrest,
Vicious contagion, or a moral pest?
Junction with crime will leaven all of good,
As brackish stream embitters the whole flood.
By mere acquaintance, inclination bends;
Man first opposes, yields, and then defends:
Each conscience vanquish'd, swells the foe's array,
Who walks in error, recommends the way.
Man must be studied on this gen'ral base,
Not as a whole, but unit in the race.
Each will indulg'd, persuades a kindred trait;
He speaks—some echo; acts—some imitate.
Nor lives for self alone, but ere he dies,
Lures some t'ward death, or leads them to the skies.
Here is a liability so vast,
It makes insolvent all our richest past;
Debts ever swelling, ev'ry year enlarg'd,
Incurr'd, incurring, but by none discharg'd.

Reflection o'er man's neediness reveals
How much he never learns or never feels.
Roused by a trifle, wayward o'er a whim,
Important things are trivial to him.
Some love debasing, or some petty spite,
Some taste of dress, or pride, or appetite;
These agitate, whilst he can ne'er confess
Some real want, some soul deep emptiness.
So 'tis the passion that we know the best,
Lies lone and insulated in the breast;
Each spark of hopeful toil or keen desire,
Flashes its message o'er that partial wire.
Here, a whole life of honourable chance
Is barter'd for an hour's intemperance;
Or here, the heart's best happiness is sold
To purchase the poor affluence of gold.
Shall we reproach the peasant if he find
That sensual things can satisfy the mind;
If in a dull inaction, sunk is all;
But what is mundane, what is animal?
Kept to its range, and thence untaught to roam.
Each thought finds ev'ry requisite at home;
Train'd to a diet, appetites assent,
And hunger is the daintiest condiment.

The little child whose farthest border lies
Where the grey hills stretch, whisp'ring to the skies,
Pictures a world in that extent or this,
Heav'n on some crest, and hell in some abyss.
Restricted knowledge limits the desire—
Who knows none else, refuses to aspire;
The heart consents to the accustom'd store,
And when has least, least feels its want of more.
Here 'tis the squire—nought satisfies his rage,
But the reality of acreage;
Gross is his appetite for solid food—
Park, arable, and woodland by the rood.
Now 'tis the suburbs, where high values pinch,
And gardens smile, partitioned to the inch;
Obedient shrubs grow dwarf'd to suit the space,
'Midst blossoms pent to geometric grace.
Here, with the flower-pot on the sill, we come
Upon the territorial minimum.
Yet does the attic gardener confess
Only a ratio of happiness?
Or if we step the line of innocence,
Do impure joys gall the adapted sense?
Nay, there's true pleasure in the hour's excess,
To souls unconscious of its littleness.

So may a weed, begotten of the town,
Boast an imparted value—not its own;
And hands unskill'd to bullion may trace,
Nought to detect the sterling from the base.
With all our reas'ning we must come to this,
If unprovided, man *creates* a bliss—
A latent yearning turn'd by times acute,
Reft of true joy, demands a substitute.
Man must extract a pleasure from some source,
Thirst waits not to assay the watercourse
But drinks unheeding though a poison float
On ev'ry drop that laves his parching throat.
'Tis habit moulds the plastic sympathies,
And manhood seeks what unprepar'd he flies.
In vain we sneer, in vain the choice condemn,
Love's tendrils seize upon the nearest stem:
The heart essays the pleasures first at hand,
Economising substance at command;
And in the lowest spheres ne'er fails to find,
Joys unperceiv'd by unaccustom'd mind.
Were the sun quench'd, conception fain would form
A sunshine from the lightning of the storm;
Or melody distracted, we should laud
To harmony our previous discord.

If man were dead to joy, he'd learn'd to know
Some pleasurable emotion in his woe;
Or had he never seen the day's broad light,
Found light in stars and fulgence in the night.
The rugged waste which never cereal bore,
Proud of indigenous weeds, attempts no more.
The human shape to man is noblest known,
Hence angel forms he fashions as his own.
Where is the moral energy to cope
With hearts unus'd to strive and dead to hope?
Who shall inspire with more exalted place
Minds which have never thought beyond the base?
True, as emergers from the gen'ral host—
Rome, Cincinnatus; Wilts, her Duck, may boast;
Whilst to the Scottish ploughman mem'ry turns,
Fraught with its tribute to unhappy Burns;
Immortal genius bloom'd on untill'd earth,
And brav'd the disadvantages of birth.
Yet, all in all, the peasant is denied
That needful gain to excellence allied.
That right return which virtue must attain,
Or the best fence of tutelage is vain;
Oppression fells the children of the soil,
And wrests from justice the reward of toil.

I eulogise no cities—these can show
Their mede of crime, their complement of woe;
Thought turns aghast from their offensive vice,
And wonders how its votaries entice.
In the rank air such sick'ning vapours float,
They dim the sight and irritate the throat.
Intemp'rance, whom a thousand pangs bespeak,
Sits in pale triumph on the faded cheek;
And squalid want, and tottering disease,
And insolence, so selfishly at ease,
That virtue, blushing, scarcely dares the streets,
But shrinks before the ribaldry she meets.
I sing no mean comparison—the town
Boasts wickedness essentially its own;
And all the crimes which bloom in country air,
Are doom'd to bloated reproduction there.
I sing the boor's condition—if I show
His errors, 'tis to reason whence they grow;
To fathom the injustice of his state,
To heal, not wound; to soothe, not aggravate;
And for his faults let him their depth aver,
Who more than human, never stoop'd to err,
But we, the vessels of a baser clay
Think thoughts, do deeds, maybe as black as they.

Our hearts may be as rotten at the core,
Though art join art, and nature seems no more.
If we are human it is sin confess'd,
None lives so perfect, he may damn the rest.
He who appears beyond his fellows good,
Is he whose failing is least understood,
To judge our frailty, use temptation's test,
Ev'n strongholds fall when enemies invest,
He cannot claim a victory's requite
Who had no field to lose, no foe to fight.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK III.

OF Hope.—Her power to arouse.—Her invincibility when aroused.—Of improvement.—Its origin in a sense of necessity.—Its gradual development.—The pleasures of Hope.—Her innocent deceptions.—Their effect to stimulate.—Indifference worse than despair.—Of the mutual dependence of the emotions.—The curse of hopelessness.—Contrast between the urban and rural labourer.—The peasant ignorant of a chance of improvement.—His industry merely mechanical.—Of selfishness.—Its presence unavoidable, but not necessarily baneful.—Of the composition of our passions.—Man not to dissent from his accorded disposition.—His very defects adaptable to good purposes.—A rustic endeavour assumed.—Despair the inevitable consequence.—Of incomes generally.—Below the standard of necessity, they invite vice.—The theory of selfishness adapted to thrift.—Nature lessons kindly.—Charity a hindrance to permanent improvement.—Man's right to life's necessities unquestionable.—Of judgment and enthusiasm.—Of justice.

BOOK III.

MY lowly muse, with perseverance tries,
To put plain truths in none but plainest guise.
Unlike Corinna, she would not essay
With beauty's art to lure the palm away.
If she be barren of poor common sense,
Where is the use in poorer eloquence?
I would she sang as facts alone dictate,
Rather the witness than the advocate.
If all my efforts father failure's crime,
Condemn my reas'ning, ridicule my rhyme;
Tear the poor laurel from the poet's brow—
He wore none once, and will not miss it now.
What if the landscape of his hope be bare,
If deserts yield no corn, they ask no care;

Unknown to fame, man may achieve a rest;
But souls ambitious, never yet were blest.
Still would they hug the predisposing cause,
Resent, despise, yet covet the applause.
With fresh desire, successful bosoms beat,
More eager, fed—more hungry, if replete;
Ambition's hope seems borne on ev'ry breeze,
Flinging refusal to ignoble ease.
Content expires before elation's claim,
Starv'd on the scant emoluments of Fame!

First we have studied whence the current springs,
Which flows t'wards base or elevated things.
Seen young desires to minds maturer last,
And dispositions rooted in the past.
Assuming this as undivided truth,
None can excel, but who aspired in youth.
Once fixed in form, once moulded to a shape,
How change that form, or from that mould escape?
True to bring reason to a mind mature,
Involves two tasks—to injure and to cure.
First, with a grip unfalteringly kind,
To express the natural morass of the mind;

In the deep beds of prejudice to sink,
Kind stepping stones, till bridg'd from brink to brink,
The tim'rous heart can move to reason's bank,
Dry of the flood—it, unadmonish'd drank.
Held to their places by the weight of years,
Habits grow firmer as time's moss adheres.
But there's a lever which, applied can move,
Apathy to interest, interest to love;
Rais'd is the latch—the rusty hinges creak,
And through the gates the pent emotions break;
Loos'd is the soul, she rides the golden flood,
Where waves discourse sweet music to her mood;
Yonder her post, where Heav'n bends low to sip,
The dainty current with Eve's ruby lip;
Where earth and sky embrace in hues beyond,
And HOPE springs forth, the offspring of the bond.
Oh, Hope! thou charmer to the weary breast,
Foil'd, where elated—disappointed, blest;
As Damon faithful, Menas insincere,
Whatever else, unalterably dear.
There is a life-boat given to the waves,
To rescue shipwreck'd souls from desp'rate graves.
Her crew are phantoms, thin and changing sprites,
Press'd to each form the shifting mood invites.

They seize the drowning heart with tend'rest hand,
And fascinate with promises of land.
Sprung in the path, despair is wont to crawl;
Successive blooms may venture but to fall;
Yet Hope, transform'd, Cœneus-like, shall rise,
Clad in fresh beauty, t'wards the smiling skies.
The secret of all excellence below,
Is to exceed the little that we know.
The soul, just conscious of a cramp'd estate,
Impatient grown, aspires to emigrate;
To found new landmarks on some untrod wild,
And breathe the air convention ne'er defil'd.
Now discontentment, bridl'd, moves with grace,
Not surely slow, or at too fiery pace.
No more wild cereals excite his blood,
He grows fastidiously correct in food;
Thistles of road-side envy soon disdains,
And only feeds on virtue's golden grains.
Self-conscious merit, argue as you will,
Is but a discontented feeling still;
And man successful effort never knew,
If sure the world awarded him his due.
Sense of a possible improvement brings,
The first reflection of more perfect things;

But if we see no primitive defect,
How for ideals tax our intellect?

If all degrees and classes of mankind,
Treasur'd a model station in the mind,
Some lofty peak to which the effort rose;
Where budded crime, where indolent repose?
Aspiring there and straining ev'ry nerve,
Hope first attain'd, then struggl'd to preserve;
Each step improv'd the last advantage gain'd,
And vigour, doubly vigourous, remain'd.
So in the earlier times, see tokens pass,
From hand to hand, of iron, lead or brass;
But these, reliev'd of their fictitious price,
Silver and gold can now alone suffice.
The pilgrim o'er the desert's sandy waste
Finds the black pool refreshing to his taste,
Snuffs its stale waters in the arid air,
And revels in a very heaven there.
But Afric's hardships o'er, fastidious grown,
He sees the merest blemish with a frown;
Raises the glass to an exacting eye,
Scolds o'er a smear, and sickens at a fly.

Man to improve, must first admit the need,
Then find his hope impulsive to the deed;
Add zeal to zest, and sanguine of the sum,
How glibly items t'wards that total come.
Hope is the lover who has lean'd to kiss,
The cheek o'erflowing with a future bliss;
Bent to her honey'd lips, man's yearnings swell
'Neath the sweet tale she perorates so well;
Responsive fancies echo from his breast,
He hopes to have, and with possession's blest.
What matters it the blossom hope espies,
Droops in an hour, and ere the morrow dies?
She has seiz'd substance from a shadow's store,
And trick'd the day of half the ills it bore.
She dreams the present—to no future wakes,
And dies herself before that morrow breaks.
So Hope becomes a stimulant to raise
The mind from present pangs to happier days,
And, doctor-like, supports the sick'ning soul,
With smiling promises to make it whole.
The genial artifice attains its ends,
By sheer encouragement the patient mends;
Sooth'd by the breeze the languid senses turn,
Imbibe its spirit, and recov'ry learn.

Where does Hope venture, what esteem her rest?
Yon lowly hill, or heaven-piercing crest?
Desir'd, 'tis reached; contemplated, 'tis trod,
For space collapses at her magic nod.
When we perceive the beacon of success,
We learn the path, nor linger nor digress;
The abject heart looks downward all the day,
And counts each rut and pebble in the way;
Regret prefers the morass to the track;
For ever ling'ring, ever turning back;
Indiff'rence robs ambition of her wings,
And ranks the soul midst gravitating things;
Worse than they all, she never looks beyond,
Cannot aspire, and cannot ev'n despond.
Stretch'd at full length, along the mountain base,
See Lethargy, and stupor veils his face;
'Neath the thick folds his bloodshot eyeballs roll,
And ev'ry glance disclaims a sovereign soul.
Above, grow blossoms of perpetual life—
To strive is good, though stricken in the strife.
Hard by, miasmal swamps, whose noxious breath,
Poisons the soul, and dulls it into death.
Time's present sorrows—his surrounding mists—
Hope cleaves, assured a happiness exists;

Arm'd with a smile, she charms the toil away,
And plucks a gem from out a world of clay.
O'er the dark vista, where fierce waters roll,
Some struggling ray beats downward on the soul.
Howl ye rude blasts! the skilful seaman's sport,
Your vengeful breath assists the bark to port.
Bridl'd your cunning, rein'd your black designs:
Bear me, ye gales, where yonder beacon shines.
Extracted hence, the inference is clear,
Man must have hope, if he would persevere.
Given no chance of an improv'd estate,
No aim will goad, no zeal will agitate.
The passions of the human breast find tone,
From touch extraneous, effort not their own;
They all depend for little or for much,
On some awak'ning breath, or rousing touch;
None is complete, or independent whole,
But strung together form a perfect soul.
The practis'd hand runs nimbly o'er the strings,
And each its share of gen'ral concord brings;
But unskill'd fingers exercise no art,
They seek no grace, no harmony impart,
Harsh is the clash; the sweetest note unpress'd,
And rude discordance gather'd from the rest.

Some loving hand must wake the dormant keys,
And marshal the rude ranks in symphonies;
The once dull soul is eager to respond,
Wide armies rise, 'neath Hope's creative wand;
Love spurs them on; they revel in the fight;
Their sabres, flashing, cleave the veil of night;
Through the rent fold, bursts ray on silver ray,
And with warm kiss, the rosy lips of day.

All are not born of philosophic mind;
Anguish degrades, not elevates the mind;
Satanic legions have one weapon less,
When life is rid of living's bitterness.
Souls melt with gratitude o'er gifts which bless,
But fire with woe, and madden with distress.
It may be, some to higher truths direct
Their weary minds when earthly joys are wreck'd;
But there are hosts to whom Hope's dying knell,
Swells to a peal that rings them into hell!
If in the loftiest themes the test apply,
Why own it not in mediocrity?
Does not the moral of all time display,
Who has but little, throws that mite away;

Who lowest is, attempts the least to rise;
Born base, lives baser, and at basest, dies.
Men bred in cities, from acquaintance know,
No sphere so fallen but one ranks below.
They see the steps defin'd to better state,
And oft, if wise, will strive to emulate.
The peasant has no self-reliant sense,
Zeal brings no comfort, toil no competence:
Fresh hardships' hand his hard-won slumber breaks,
And want confronts him, when he re-awakes.
The wildest venture which his fancy dares,
Ne'er bids him hope cessation of his cares;
He knows no other than the stations seen,
The lord, the slave, and one broad gulf between.
Of bettering efforts his ideas are dim,
Riches for them, and poverty for him.
He takes this axiom on its broadest base,
Nor once aspires beyond his wonted place.
What nobler aims the peasantry would learn,
Could they a hope of competence discern;
From hirelings rise to be themselves the lords,
And gain for thrift some coveted rewards!
The skill'd mechanic saunters to his toil,
With jaunty step and self-dependent smile;

Works to more purpose, if with self-respect,
And earns the more, the more his intellect.
A present profit not alone repays,
But future honour may reward his days;
His labour dies not e'er his sweat is dry,
But bears a harvest for posterity.
No such inducement moves the swarthy hind,
His handiwork finds no responsive mind;
Through the long bondage of his life he wears,
Mere food his hope, mere appetite his cares.
His heavy tread partakes his gen'ral mien,
The listless apathy of a machine.
He feels no zest progression can instil,
Toilsome his frame, but indolent his will.
A sullen industry seems effort's most,
No honest pride or emulating boast;
Just set in motion when the toil's begun,
And render'd passive when the task is done.
True, here and there rusticity allows,
Contest 'twixt hoes, and rivalry 'twixt ploughs;
For once the blood a warmer course may flow,
When Vict'ry's laurels deck his half-craz'd brow.
But unaccustom'd to the famous sphere,
Glory seems toil, the recompense, the beer.

His task complete, his energy has flown;
Renown's first ray, descending, strikes him down;
And slow to urge his secondary claim,
He, soon forgot, the plough acquires the fame.

The thought is low'ring to our human kind,
But SELF is the controller of the mind,
His is the hand which bends our nature's bow,
And speeds the arrow wheresoe'er it go.
Our vice, our virtue, t'ward one purport tend,
Self the beginning, selfishness the end;
Like rivers wand'ring from a varied source,
Borne t'ward one sea, centripetal in force.
I would not be the cynic who implies,
Man breathes on Virtue's blossom, and it dies;
Nor, Zoilus-like, with sour contempt detract,
The sweet encumbrance from each honey'd act.
But when we turn to analyse the mind,
Move aspect's dial, mark the wheels behind;
How motive power obeys one lever's call,
And one chief pivot bears the complex all;
Then we perceive the spirit of the whole,
The power to start, the genius to control.

What shall we say? inveigh a virtue none,
If not an absolute or perfect one?
Then strike the void expression from our roll;
Close Virtue's gate, for none can meet the toll.
How nicely balanc'd is the unfetter'd will,
One grain decides the scale to good or ill;
The heart is so susceptible of change,
One touch can rouse, one error disarrange.
If we dissect our tendencies, we see
Aims rendered good or evil by degree;
The same desire to shame or honour born,
To grace or spoil, to blemish or adorn.
A single mood may plural lengths dispense,
Here, 'tis contentment, and there, indolence.
Here Mercy pleads, there weakness can't reprove;
Here, hate is vengeance; there, 'tis almost love.
The miser's passion is but thrift's disease;
One seems to meddle—one asks selfish ease.
Here, learning riots over common sense;
What there is candour, here is impudence.
Thus stands the case: all passions which invite,
Less elemental are, than composite;
In all some good, and some of evil blent;
Here, more of this—there, that ingredient.

The heart is a constituency of loves,
Each voting as it censures or approves.
It fills the gaps as vacancies occur
In the high parliament of character.
Factions there are, and parties; these, defin'd,
Like light and shade, delineate the mind.
They aid or mar, surrender, or contest,
And which preponderates, compels the rest.
Does man seek friends that he may bliss bestow,
Or to increase his joys, or soothe his woe?
If selfish bliss in genuine love has ceas'd,
Why seek those first, who need his favours least?
The worthy pastor who, with honest zest,
To raise his congregation, strives his best,
Would, dead to self, find chief incentive flown;
He aids their souls, lest he neglect his own.
The frugal heart, where abnegation reigns,
Feeding its boasts, forgets its hungry pains;
And kindly breasts, of charitable zeal
Warm with an impulse, 'tis their bliss to feel.
T'wards one broad stream each thirsty willow leans;
All seek one end, though seek by diff'rent means.
Sift human nature—own the maxim true—
Self is the substance, and the residue.

Improvement is the moralist of woe;
He can no shame who can no honour know.
We all can strive, if we perceive the good—
The moral appetite gains power from food.
As ripen'd fruits contain the seed of more,
So virtue, practis'd, ever virtue bore.
We give the wish to the prevailing sense,
And what our virtue asks is recompense.
High o'er the things of grovelling time we wing,
To those desires enlarg'd ambitions bring
To nobler deeds than yet we've ventur'd rise,
And snatch approval even from the skies.
Hearts must be more than human, if they can
Forego the disposition of the man.
Just strung aright, inclin'd no more or less,
Here, no shortcoming, and there, no excess;
With ev'ry virtue ready in its place,
And ev'ry passion sifted to a grace!
Jehovah speaks—an universe attends,
And lo! man's very righteousness offends.
What need we more to make it understood
That lesser evil constitutes our good?
Human perfection must in all depend
On imperfections wielded to good end,

Of various errors to a virtue train'd,
Severally rash, but mutually restrain'd;
Virtues are form'd of atoms rude and base,
And heav'n alone can gild them to a grace.
True unmix'd virtues are the stars of heav'n,
The jewels of the skies—to worlds not given;
As soon from out their azure, pluck these gems,
As find their like in human diadems.
Tis not for man, man's nature to upbraid,
The fabric to rebuke the hand which made:
Improve we can—resisting, we must mar,
But who errs most, dissembles what we are.
To form a virtue, must our hearts dissent,
Unless immaculate every element?
Chemistry teaches how two powers combin'd,
Become a third, which smacks of neither kind.
Mark two dry gases mix'd, and waters gush;
See shame and innocence produce a blush;
See human units, summ'd in light divine,
Forego their dross, and as pure metal shine.
Now, he who would from lethargy excite,
Must not ignore, but soothe the appetite;
Must turn the natural obstacle to use,
And not attempt to conquer, but induce.

So turgid currents damm'd, new dangers gain—
Burst from the bank, and devastate the plain ;
But, held to rules which regulate their course,
Flow with a mild and serviceable force.
Granted, some rustic diff'rent to his peers,
Attains a hope, and hoping, perseveres :
Finds the assumption of discretion sweet,
And life, without exertion, incomplete.
What the result? can he the mood retain,
When increas'd sense of loss is all his gain?
He breasts the flood to learn its teeming source,
And finds it irresistible in force.
Let him be toilsome, frugal, what you will,
Impotence finds him but a pauper still.
Come pale disease, with surreptitious stealth—
Unnurs'd he sinks, or sickens into health ;
Or bent beneath the weight of age's snows,
Where bides his bread, where lingers his repose?
No choice vouchsaf'd, he to the workhouse hies,
Drains the last bitter dregs of life, and dies.
I cast no thoughts in mercenary mould,
Nor sings my muse an eulogy of gold.
When Fortune, over lavish of her cheer,
Concedes more gifts than necessary here,

Man often loses the chief joys allow'd,
In vain attempts to seize the whole bestow'd;
Just as a brimming cup we dare not kiss,
Lest spilling some embitter all our bliss.
Methinks the ideal wealth for fate to give,
Is just enough to do some good and live;
That, disincumber'd of an extreme share—
Not crush'd with riches, nor oppress'd with care;
Time's stream so smooth, man, undisturb'd, can turn,
Leave life to self, make death his chief concern.
Some teach us only how to live: but I,
Had rather that they taught mankind to die;
For all the acts so honourable to men,
Will be but jewel-hilted daggers then.
But there's a point where poverty breeds sin,
Where virtue flies, and ready vice creeps in;
Exhaust the pure, and poison'd air must come,
With eager haste to fill the vacuum.
Virtues are the exotics of the heart,
Not instituted, but induc'd by art;
Pearls o'er whose bed drear wastes of passions roll,
And, never sought, lie hidden in the soul.
The gaudiest flower, transferr'd from light to gloom,
Gave sickly leaves, and ne'er produc'd a bloom;

Oppression, want, and ignorance combin'd,
Are fatal to the blossoms of the mind.
An income match'd to the recipient's state—
Not pinching small, or cumbersomely great—
Is that which, with necessities supplied,
Admits a certain overplus beside.
Herein exists the virtue to enhance
Frugality, and curb extravagance.
The present cares a recompense obtain,
And THRIFT looks irresistible as GAIN.
Thrift in the poor, is armour for the strife;
Economy persuades to moral life.
Wrapp'd in the present, to the future blind,
Man sinks below the level of mankind.
Yet he who ever wants—whom hope defies,
How can he thrive, and how economise?
An individual gain is not thrift's end,
To all men's benefit results extend.
Broad is the wave that breaks on welfare's strand,
And flings its spray like diamonds o'er the land.
When strife makes canvass, thrift gives peace her vote;
Prosperity is war's best antidote.
Kings, apprehensive of internal woes,
Divert their subjects with exterior foes.

Where are the mighty realms of classic lore,
Design'd, erected for an evermore?
Alas! for all their pride, the lines that tell
Their tale of glory, publish how they fell.
True strength is not in warlike hosts display'd,
These rise like blossoms, and like blossoms fade.
No ruddier sky than that which welcomes night,
And weakness lurks 'neath military might.
Empires erected on victorious fields,
Bear not the future inborn greatness yields;
But like a lightning burst on Alpine height,
Daze for a breath, and vanish into night!
Oh, Nature! sweet instructress of the mind,
How pure thy counsels—and thy laws, how kind!
Quick to instil, and by example prove
How true is the omnipotence of love!
Attend my muse! from the reflection draw
Thy germs of truth, thy rudiments of law.
Does the same sun, which gilds the mountain chain,
O'erlook the lowly molehill of the plain?
Or summer shower pour out its balmy breath
On stately trees and leave the weed to death?
So to each class its share of heav'n's broad light,
Not as the rest's concession, but its right:

Forbearance can no permanence sustain,
And for result mere charity is vain.
Alms crush the spirit with a subtle weight,
Demoralize, ev'n whilst alleviate;
Good, to endure, must hold a longer lease
Than private whim or popular caprice;
Must boast a better than nyctanthes' fate,
One bloom exhausts, and hours obliterate.
I deprecate enthusiasm here,
Be, as you will, indulgent or severe,
Agree or differ, echo or dissent,
But let cold reason mould your argument.
Enthusiasm is the foam which rides,
The restless wave-crests of Atlantic tides;
Thin as a vapour, scatter'd by a breath,
It lends no substance to the depths beneath.
Impulsive movements spring from weakly source—
Conviction strengthens, principles lend force;
Moral persuasion should the signal give,
And sympathy be argumentative.
He instigated by the moment's mood,
Is fickle in his evil or his good.
Retrospect must on disposition wait;
Reflection coincide, not militate.

The peasant prays no pity: if he sue
Justice is all he asks, and all his due;
He needs no gifts, nor ventures a pretence
For the infliction of beneficence.
Life's necessaries are a poor requite—
Who asks for nature's need, demands a right.
But he who sweats to find her wants denied,
Lives a reproach to all who coincide.

Oh, Justice! art thou but a name, a wraith,
Treading the mystic avenues of faith:
When the sun fades, and the last rays of light
Sink, one by one, 'neath the black waves of night?
Or art thou a sweet flower, which, fading, press'd
Deep down a thorn in conscience's tender breast?
As the fair truant, blushing, sought to mend,
A life's neglect by mourning o'er thine end?
Whatever else, too rare to mortal ken,
Some beauteous thing which shuns the haunts of men;
Flies to the wilds, and into nature's ear,
Pours the sweet strain to Heaven and angels dear.
Or it may be, that tir'd of endless jars,
Of fruitless strife, and unproductive wars,

Justice declines the field, that men may wrest
Laurels of shame, and victories unblest.
See how she spreads her wings to catch the wind,
And leaves these realms of anarchy behind;
Mounts the thin ether, cleaves the cloudy gloom,
And gives the world to chaos and to doom!

My song is done; the embers of my mood
Have chill'd, and charr'd is the once living wood.
Loose are the strings which gave my rustic air,
And silence the lone melody they bear.
Yet I would tune thee, my poor lyre, once more,
To the soft notes of love, and then give o'er;
That these thy last vibrations might lay bare
My heart, with one fond passion graven there.
Pearl of my fancy! is the craving vain
Which thirsts for thy kind solitude again?
Which yearns to batten on thy fragrant breath,
And prays a rural resting place in death?
Oh, I have lov'd thee from my earliest day,
Not blindly, madly, but as true loves may.
How good thou wert, how beauteous, how sincere,
My soul can tell—'tis all recorded there.

Scarce had I op'd the treasures of thy heart,
E'er came the mandate, aye, so soon to part,
To leave thee then, to break each golden bond,
And find fresh loves in the wide wastes beyond.
Fell fate! it scath'd my soul—Hope's lustrous beam
Fled like the bright illusion of a dream;
Torn from thy arms—from quiet and repose,
From all life's poesy to all its prose;
Doom'd to the city's loom, where busy crowds
Spend there wan strength in weaving funeral shrouds.
Oft on the shifting sands of thought, I go
Watching Time's billows as they onward flow
Around, the treasur'd hopes of days no more,
Lie, broken shells, cast up on Memory's shore

Old rural haunts, with youthful fancies bright,
My pen, regretful, splutters as I write;
Still would I revel in the dreams of yore.
And for my knowledge, tax tradition's store.
Would that indulgent fate had plac'd my lot
In the lone dell—the rose encumber'd cot,
From city's roar, and troublous crowds remote
To find in peace a living's antidote.

Yet though I've cloven the sweet waters wide,
And seen the noxious sediment they hide,
Soon settling to the pre-existent state—
The ripples smile—the murmurs fascinate.
Childlike, I'll weave me many garlands yet
Of bluebell, daffodil, and violet;
Or, charm'd, I'll saunter through the tangled glade,
Where the wan primrose pales upon the shade.
Climb emerald hills, where sunny meadows wear
The cowslip's gold dust in their wanton hair;
Breathe Nature's laws, ere man their force repeal'd,
And Want's pale face crouch'd near the florid field.
My early joy! though cityward I rove,
Doom'd to the dread vicissitudes of love;
Press'd to my heart, I bear thy image still—
Thy hair, my flowers upon the window sill.
There do I train my wild ideas of thee,
Till Freedom breathes upon my reverie;
And as the prison'd bird, denied to roam,
Repeats the lyrics of his sylvan home;
So mingling with the city's stagnant breath,
Their scent discourses of my native heath.
I love the rustic vale—none else can bear
Rest to disease—or medicine to care:

This soul deep love—this tendency innate,
No time shall weaken—space, eradicate.
Argyra's stream, or dark oblivion's flood,
Find all their boasted potencies withstood;
Still do I yearn for each remember'd scene,
With love increas'd, and mem'ry ever green.

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